European Science, Engineering and Technology Highlights[1]
JUNE 2014

To navigate down the report, hold down the CTRL key and click on the title to go to the desired article. You may return to the selected country by clicking on the ⇮ at the bottom of each article.

[1] *Note: If you would like additional information or background, please feel free to contact either Carine Polliotti at cpolliot@nsf.gov or Ana Helman at ahelman@nsf.gov*

Israel:
13. EU, Israel sign Horizon 2020 association agreement

Macedonia:
14. Fund for Innovation and Technological Development established by the Government of the FYR (former Yugoslav Republic) of Macedonia

Moldova:
15. National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education to be established

Montenegro:
16. Strategy for scientific and research activity of Montenegro (2008-2016)

Poland:
17. General Assembly of Science Europe in Krakow: New President Elected

Portugal:
18. The Sustainability of the Science System at Stake

Russia:
19. Plan to increase research at national universities
20. New higher education ranking system expected by 2015

Turkey:
21. Turkey joins Horizon 2020 research and innovation program

United Kingdom:
22. Part-time student numbers tumble in England
23. Only 17% of UK universities are run by women – Why?

1 New global university ranking launched in Europe – U-Multirank

The latest major global university ranking, U-Multirank, was launched in Brussels earlier this month. With more than 850 higher education institutions of various types from 70 countries compares over 30 indicators – and 5,000 study programs and 60,000 students surveyed – Europe's answer to the 'big three' rankings says it is also the world's biggest. U-Multirank stresses that it is not a typical ranking.

It takes a user-driven, multi-dimensional approach comparing different kinds of institutions across a range of activities and grading them from A for 'very good' to E for 'weak', rather than producing a global top 100 universities based on composite scores.

Full article available at:
http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140514061139715

2 Mobilizing Europe's Universities for Smart Specialization

The European Commission and the European University Association are convening a high level conference on the role of universities in smart specialization in Brussels. Smart specialization is a new innovation policy concept designed to promote the efficient and effective use of public investment in research. Its goal is to boost regional innovation in order to achieve economic growth and prosperity, by enabling regions to focus on their strengths. The conference agenda includes four cases studies of university-regional partnerships in the development of Smart Specialization Strategies, as well as presentations on EU support by the Director Generals for Regional Policy, Research and Education

Full article available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=events&eventcode=3DB045C8-E6FE-6D79-D831F9EC8964E102

3 Top scientists to decide who governs the European Research Council (ERC)

Brussels, 27 May 2014
European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Máire Geoghegan-Quinn has appointed seven high-level scientists to identify the future members of the European Research Council's (ERC) governing body, the Scientific Council. This Identification Committee will propose a shortlist of candidates for the ERC Scientific Council's renewal in 2015.

Full article available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=newsalert&year=2014&na=na-270514

4 European Research Area (ERA) Progress Reports: Crucial tools for change

Backed by the conclusions adopted on 21 February 2014 by the Competitiveness Council, we now have a firm basis to advance on ERA, thanks to the first ERA Progress Report, a comprehensive snapshot of EU research.

This first report is not simply an assessment of recent policy developments. It is a tool for change. For the first time, we have comparable data, validated by Member States, to substantiate our discussions and direct future policy initiatives.

Full article available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/newsletter2/foreword_en.htm

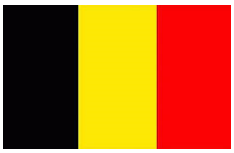
5 Austria: Institutional merger in the wake of the Federal elections

Science and innovation policies and all budgets formerly governed by the Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF) are now run under a single roof of the Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW).

The coalition agreement signed by the new government (December 2013) foresees an important adjustment of the existing RTDI governance structures. Science and innovation policies and all budgets formerly governed by the Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF) are now run under a single roof of the Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW). The Ministry is led by Reinhold Mitterlehner replacing the former Minister of Science and Research Töchterle.

Full article available at:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/at/highlights/highlight_0013

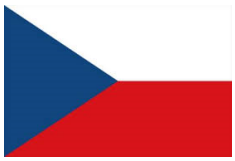
6 Promising figures for R&D in Belgium ccc



The latest final figures for research and development indicate that Belgium has in 2012 invested 2.24% of its GDP in R&D. This is a historical record for the country and a trend that is in line with the EU target of 3% for 2020.

Full article available at:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/be/highlights/highlight_0020

7 Czech Republic: Policy Statement of the new Czech government outlines plans for science, research and innovation policy



The new center-left Czech government formed by the Czech Social Democratic Party, the ANO 2011 Movement and the Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party presented policy priorities, including in science, research and innovation policy, and won confidence vote in the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament in mid-February 2014.

Full article available at:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/cz/highlights/highlight_0004

8 Czech Republic becomes EMBL's 21st member state

Forty years after its foundation, EMBL (European Molecular Biology Laboratory) announces its 21st member state: the Czech Republic. Building on a successful bilateral relationship, the Czech Republic's membership grants Czech scientists access to EMBL's state-of-the-art instruments, facilities and world-class training programs.
As a member state, the Czech Republic will have voting rights on EMBL's governing body – the EMBL Council. Czech scientists will be able to access EMBL's state-of-the-art facilities and services, and the country's early career researchers will be eligible for scholarships in EMBL's highly reputed PhD and Postdoctoral programs. EMBL membership also opens the possibility of PhD degrees awarded jointly by EMBL and a Czech university. In the longer term, it raises the opportunity of establishing an EMBL partnership institute in the country.

Full article available at:
http://www.alphagalileo.org/ViewItem.aspx?ItemId=142623&CultureCode=en

9 Academy of Finland's annual report 2013 out now

2013 was a year of exceptional importance for the Academy of Finland. The international evaluation of the Academy was completed and the Finnish Government passed a resolution to reform the system of government research institutes and research funding. Both the evaluation and the reform have profound implication for the Academy's role and position.

The Academy's funding stream in 2013 was again quite diverse. The overall volume of research funding increased slightly from the previous year to 335 million euros ($457.9 millions). This was thanks to the Government's third supplementary budget in which the Academy was given an additional 20 million euros ($27.3 millions) to support knowledge-based growth. The funding was allocated to facilitate research excellence and to launch new research programs, specifically the programs on Arctic research and mineral resources and substitution.

Full article available at:
http://www.aka.fi/en-GB/A/Academy-of-Finland/Media-services/Releases1/Academy-of-Finlands-annual-report-2013-out-now/

10 Iceland and Norway sign up to join Horizon 2020

Iceland and Norway became the first non-EU countries to associate to Horizon 2020, the seven-year EU research and innovation program launched in January. The decision, taken at a meeting of the European Economic Area (EEA) Joint Committee, takes effect from the beginning of Horizon 2020 allowing these two countries' researchers and companies to participate on the same basis as their counterparts in the EU. In return, the two countries will contribute financially to Horizon 2020, the biggest ever EU research and innovation program with a budget of nearly €80 billion ($109.2 billion).

Full article available at:
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-566_en.htm?locale=en

11 Iceland: Science and Technology Policy 2013 – 2016

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

The Icelandic Science and Technology Policy Council adopted a new policy, for the years 2013 - 2016, in late November 2013. The essence of the new policy is defined in this way: Human resources are the most valuable resources any nation has and following a period of severe austerity measures, priority will be given to creating favorable conditions for young, well educated people that choose to build their career in Iceland, thereby strengthening the foundations of the knowledge society of the future. A solid education system, together with a competitive labor market that can tackle the ever-changing needs of society and industry, are essential in this development. In order for this to happen, Iceland needs to emphasize international competitiveness and flexibility in the research and innovation environment.

Full article available at:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/is/highlights/highlight_0002

12 Ireland: New Smart Futures program

A new 3-year program, Smart Futures, was launched in April 2014 in Ireland to encourage more students to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The program seeks to improve the strategic coordination and alignment of industry-outreach resources and drive the uptake of students selecting STEM subjects at secondary and higher education. Smart Futures began as a pilot in late 2011 following a previous 'Science in Schools' initiative and is now part of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs. It is coordinated by SFI Discover (formerly Discover Science & Engineering), the education and outreach program of Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), in partnership with Engineers Ireland's education outreach program, STEPS.

Source:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/ie/highlights/highlight_0024

13 EU, Israel sign Horizon 2020 association agreement

European Commission's President José Manuel Barroso and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today witnessed the signature of Israel's association to Horizon 2020, the new EU research and innovation program. Horizon 2020 offers a huge opportunity to enhance the traditionally active cooperation between Israeli and EU researchers and innovators. Under the terms of the agreement, Israel will have the same access to the program as EU Member States and other Associated Countries. In return, it will contribute to the Horizon 2020 budget.

Full article available at:
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-633_en.htm?locale=en

14 Fund for Innovation and Technological Development established by the Government of the FYR (former Yugoslav Republic) of Macedonia

The Fund for Innovation and Technological Development, which is envisioned in the Law on Innovation Activity, launched its activities in January 2014 after enacting its statute. The mission of the fund is to provide financing and co-financing of research and innovative projects, as well as technical assistance and consulting services for start-up and existing enterprises. In 2014 the fund will be mainly financially supported by the government.

Full article available at:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/mk/highlights/highlight_0013

15 Moldova: National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education to be established

A new agency for assessing the quality of education in Moldova will be established in accordance with the amendments to the Law on Education (1995), approved by the Parliament in December 2013. It will also assess the quality of university research. Under the amendments to the Law on Education, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education will be required to accredit higher education institutions and contribute to policy development in this area, to the credibility of higher education and professional qualifications in Moldova. The new agency will have a Boarding Council made up from of 15 members. They will be elected based on contest wherein international experts will participate. The mandate of each member of the Council will last 4 years. This agency will assess programs and institutions, including university research, in order to grant the right to organize training for the 3 cycles of higher education. The law also provides the establishment of the third cycle of higher education - PhD, regarded so far as

research; organization of PhD studies in doctoral schools; two types of doctorate (scientific and professional); a credit system of 180 credits for the 3rd cycle of higher education.

Source:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/md/highlights/highlight_0013

Additional information:
Moldova: The new framework for designing, implementing and evaluating the national innovation policy to be set - At the end of November 2013 the Moldovan Government approved the national innovation strategy. The strategy, which is the first policy document in the field of innovation, has initiated important institutional changes and measures to stimulate innovation activities.
Full article available at:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/md/highlights/highlight_0012

Moldova: The first national R&D Strategy was approved - The Strategy of research-development of the Republic of Moldova to 2020 was approved by the Moldovan Government at the end of December 2013. The first R&D strategy on the national level sets the vision of science development for the next seven years.
Full article available at:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/md/highlights/highlight_0011

16 Strategy for scientific and research activity of Montenegro (2008-2016)

Starting from the Stabilization and Association Agreement of Montenegro with the European Union, as well as from the general trends of the globalization process, with the competitiveness of the national economies becoming the basic factor of society development, the Government of Montenegro must be resolute in its intent to build Montenegro as a state oriented towards science and technology. Based on the above mentioned Agreement and the Lisbon Strategy, the fundamental document of EU which the national strategies of the member countries rely on, Montenegro starts development of the Strategy for Scientific-Research Activity (hereinafter: Strategy for SRA) with the aim of creating a knowledge based society. Society based on knowledge must recognize the importance of education and scientific activity and rely increasingly on its scientific-research institutions. In the conditions of an open society and a market oriented economy, knowledge reaches the highest price.

Source:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/me/policydocument/policydoc_0003

17 Poland: General Assembly of Science Europe in Krakow: New President Elected

On the 20th of May, the National Science Center, the Polish national agency supporting fundamental research, acted as host to the General Assembly of Science Europe, an association promoting the collective interests of European Research Funding Organizations (RFO) and Research Performing Organizations (RPO), comprising 52 such organizations from 27 countries.

One of the key events of the assembly was the election of the new President of Science Europe. The incumbent president, Professor Paul Boyle, is ending his term in August 2014. The representatives of member organizations of SE convening in Krakow unanimously chose Professor Miguel Seabra, from Portugal, as the next president. He will assume his duties on the 1st of September 2014.

Full article available at:
http://www.ncn.gov.pl/node/1424

18 Portugal: The Sustainability of the Science System at Stake

The current financial constraints and the economic crisis may jeopardize the efforts undertaken over the last decades to develop an integrated and mature research system. The most recent research policy actions have been controversial among the scientific community. Guaranteeing the sustainability of the past achievements remains as a critical challenge.

Full article available at:
http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/opencms/information/country_pages/pt/highlights/highlight_0007

19 Russia: Plan to increase research at national universities

The government is aiming to improve the position of Russian science in the global arena by accelerating research activities at national universities.

According to a recent report by Thomson Reuters, Russian science lags significantly behind most countries in the G20. Statistics show that over the past decade, the share of Russian papers in the Web of Science international database has dropped from 3% to 2.1% – and the papers go largely unnoticed by foreign scientists.

Full article available at:
http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140522182157898

20 Russia: New higher education ranking system expected by 2015

Russia plans to produce an official international ranking of higher education institutions, including universities in Commonwealth of Independent States, BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – and Shanghai Cooperation Organization countries by June 2015, the government said last week.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Russia and the interested federal executive bodies and organizations ought to organize the production of the international rankings of higher education institutions providing measures to ensure international recognition of such ratings.

Full article available at:
http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140529203755750

21 Turkey joins Horizon 2020 research and innovation program

Turkey will get full access to the European Union's new seven year research and innovation program, Horizon 2020, under an agreement signed today in Istanbul. The agreement granting association status to research entities from Turkey was signed by European Commission Director-General for Research and Innovation, Robert-Jan Smits, and Ahmet Yücel, Acting Undersecretary of Turkey's Ministry for EU Affairs. Turkey is the third EU partner country to become associated to Horizon 2020.

Full article available at:
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-631_en.htm?locale=en

22 Part-time student numbers tumble in England

A third of students at English universities study part-time, but numbers are falling and the decline accelerated between 2011 and 2013 – to the alarm of policy-makers who fear the downward spiral could harm the economic recovery.

Ten years ago, 47% of all entrants to higher education in England were on part-time courses. Today, that figure is down to 31%, with the biggest fall in undergraduate courses.

Full article available at:
http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140523125614333

23 Only 17% of UK universities are run by women – Why?

Women now form 56.5% of the student body, make up 53.8% of the whole workforce and occupy 45% of academic jobs in higher education in the United Kingdom. But their representation declines dramatically at senior management levels, where only 27.5% of managers are women. In vice-chancellor and principal roles, this is even lower: only 17% are women, or 29 out of 166 in 2013-14.

Full article available at:
http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140605164410589